



# Why a Convicted Killer Could Be Paroled

By SANDY HAUSMAN · NOV 3, 2013

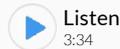


When former Governor Tim Kaine approved the transfer of a German national from the Buckingham Correctional Center to his homeland four years ago, his political opponents were furious, and as soon as he took office, Governor Bob McDonnell blocked the deal.



Soering Supporters Protest in Berlin

The prisoner was Jens Soering, a University of Virginia honors student, convicted in the brutal murder of his girlfriend's parents when he was 18. During the current campaign for governor neither candidate has mentioned Soering, the prisoner's future could depend on who is elected.



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3:34

*Sandy Hausman has the final report in the series.*

When German Chancellor Angela Merkel met with President Obama earlier this year, constituents asked her to raise the subject of extradition for Jens Soering. While he was convicted by a jury in Virginia, plenty of people in Germany think Soering is innocent. Among them, Anna Utzerath, who helped found a group called *Friends of Jens*.

"Ultimately, he is a German citizen who belongs to Germany, and the German federal government wants to have him here based on an international trade agreement between the U.S.A. and Germany."

Soering is eligible for parole, and 150 members of the German Parliament have signed a petition asking that he be released. Many wrote to Governor Bob McDonnell to press their demand, but MP Christophe Straesser says he didn't respond. "Unfortunately, we didn't get any answer, and this is not a very good signal for the cooperation between two states that are good friends."

As governor, Democrat Tim Kaine was willing to transfer Soering to Germany at the request of the Obama administration – arguing the German prison system should pay the price of keeping him locked up, but Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli attacked the decision in an interview with NBC TV in Richmond.

"I don't think Tim Kaine has ever adequately explained what on Earth he was thinking! This guy stabbed to death his girlfriend's parents – both UVA Professors if I remember correctly."

In fact, the Haysoms had nothing to do with UVA, but Cuccinelli pressed on – scoffing at a German promise to keep Soering in custody for at least two more years.

"They get downright confused in America when you say he'd have been out in two and a half years. This is a double murderer who got a life sentence."

German lawmaker Christoph Straesser says Jens had already served more than

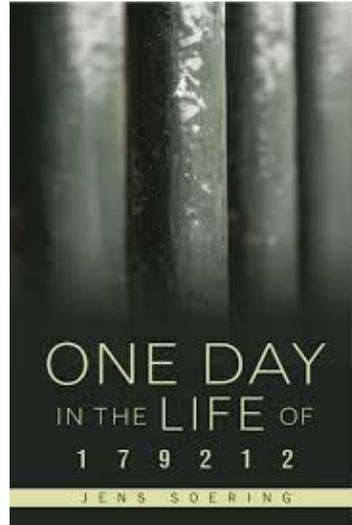
twenty years, and in his country, which puts greater emphasis on *rehabilitation* than retribution, that may be long enough.

“Yes, if he has been involved in a murder or some other big crime, he has to get punished, but you can’t reproduce the life of the people who were killed.”

In his time behind bars, Soering has not broken a single rule. He’s published nine books on theology and prison reform, but he had no hope that a parole board appointed by Governor McDonnell would release him.

“This current parole board has a parole grant rate of two percent, which means that 98% of the prisoners are denied parole, and last year they actually denied me parole 11 days before the board hearing.”

For Soering and his supporters, that is a campaign issue.



“We live in a democracy here. That means that the voters bear some responsibility for what their government does.”

We asked campaign staffers to find out if Terry McAuliffe and Ken Cuccinelli would favor parole for Soering but received no response. Based on his past remarks, Cuccinelli would not, but McAuliffe might, and he would have a chance to appoint a new parole board – one that could be more lenient. President Obama – anxious to repair damaged relations with Germany – might ask Virginia again to send Soering back.

If that happens, you can expect the man who helped put Jens Soering away, Bedford County Detective Ricky Gardner, to be furious.

“If anybody is to be paroled it’s Elizabeth. She testified against him. Doesn’t whine and cry, and this and that. Oh woe with me, and we didn’t do it, and all this kind of stuff. He shouldn’t get any kind of a break and her not.”

That said, a more liberal parole board might also look at Elizabeth Haysom’s clean record in prison and opt to release her too.

 **Listen**  
17:17

*Hear Sandy Hausman's full interview with Jens Soering, by telephone at the Buckingham Correctional Center.*

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Virginia's parole board is again considering the case of Jens Soering, a UVA honors student from Germany, convicted of killing his girlfriend's parents in 1985.

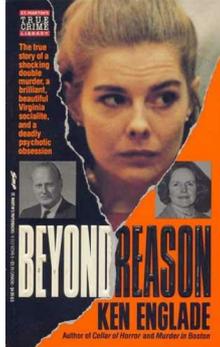


Soering has been behind bars for 27 years, but in certain circles there are persistent doubts, and his story remains in the news. In part one of our series,

On March 30, 1985, police found the bodies of Derek Haysom, a retired Canadian steel executive, and his wife, Nancy Astor Haysom, in their home near Lynchburg – the place they called Loose Chippings. They had been brutally murdered.

## Jens Soering: Doubts, Politics & Possible Parole

By SANDY HAUSMAN • OCT 29, 2013



Four years ago, then Governor Tim Kaine was talking with the Justice Department about transferring Jens Soering back to his homeland, Germany.

A jury had found the former UVA honors student guilty of killing his girlfriend's parents in Bedford County.

Jens at first confessed to the crime, then said he did so only to protect the actual killer -- the woman he loved.

## Jens Soering: New Turns in Infamous Virginia Case

By SANDY HAUSMAN • OCT 30, 2013



AP FILE PHOTO

Since his trial in 1990, former UVA honors student Jens Soering has maintained he did not kill his girlfriend's parents – a prominent couple from Bedford County, though initially he did confess to the crimes.

But after he was convicted, new information came out, and the German government asked Virginia to send Soering – a German citizen – home.

## Jens Soering: Politics & Diplomacy Could Set Him Free

By SANDY HAUSMAN • NOV 1, 2013



The Virginia Parole Board has, again, refused to release Jens Soering, a former honors student from the University of Virginia, convicted of killing his girlfriend Elizabeth Haysom's parents with a knife.

She is also behind bars as an accomplice to the gruesome crime. Both have been model prisoners, and both are eligible for parole or a pardon from the governor.

Pressure from Soering's homeland, Germany, is building, and some prominent people here in Virginia question his guilt.

